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- ART. VII. — 1. *The United States Sanitary Commission. A Sketch of its Purposes and its Work. Compiled from Documents and Private Papers.* Published by Permission. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. 1863. 16mo. pp. xiii. and 299.
2. *The Sanitary Commission Bulletin.* pp. 32. New York, 1st and 15th of each Month.
3. *The Sanitary Reporter.* pp. 8. Louisville, Ky., 1st and 15th of each month.
4. *Sanitary Commission Documents*, from No. 1 to No. 73.
5. *Medical Papers of the Sanitary Commission*, from A to S.

WE propose in the following article to describe from intimate personal knowledge, and from original documentary sources, the origin, struggles, and principles of the United States Sanitary Commission.

Fort Sumter fell on the 15th of April, 1861. The President's proclamation calling out seventy-five thousand troops for the suppression of an armed rebellion followed, on the 16th. The whole country was aroused, and while the men rushed to arms, the women sprang with equal earnestness to the task of preparing against the time of wounds and sickness in the gathering army. Churches and schools, parlors and bed-chambers, were alive with the patriotic industry of those whose fingers could not rest while a stitch could be set or a bandage torn for the comfort or relief of the soldiers who might soon encounter the enemy in the field. The noblest surgeons and physicians were lecturing in basements and vestries on the best methods of making lint and bandages, and cutting hospital garments. Little circles and associations, with patriotic intent, were springing up everywhere, and all of them were in need of information and guidance.

At a meeting of fifty or sixty ladies very informally called at the New York Infirmary for Women, April 25th, 1861, the providential suggestion of attempting to organize the whole benevolence of the women of the country into a Central Association was ripened into a plan, and a committee was appointed to carry it into immediate effect.

This committee drew up an Address "to the Women of New York, and especially to those already engaged in preparing against the time of wounds and sickness in the army," which was published in all the principal newspapers of the city of New York, calling a public meeting in the Cooper Institute on the morning of April 29th, 1861.

The Address stated the object of the meeting to be the concentration and systemizing of the spontaneous and earnest efforts of the women of the land for the supply of extra medical aid to our army. It urged that "numerous societies, working without concert, organization, or head; without any direct understanding with the official authorities; without any positive instructions as to the immediate or future wants of the army,—were liable to waste their enthusiasm in disproportionate efforts; to overlook some claims and overdo others; while they gave unnecessary trouble in official quarters by the variety and irregularity of their proffers of help, or their inquiries for guidance."

It was urged, that the form which woman's benevolence had taken, and would continue to take, "was, first, the contribution of labor, skill, and money in the preparation of lint, bandages, and other stores, in aid of the wants of the Medical Staff; second, the offer of personal service as nurses"; and that, in regard to both these points, exact official information as to what was wanted in the way of stores, and what would be accepted in the way of nurses, was essential to economy of effort and feeling; and that this information ought to be obtained by a Central Association, and diffused through the country. "To consider this matter deliberately, and to take such common action as may then appear wise, we earnestly invite the women of New York, and the pastors of the churches, with such medical advisers as may be specially invited, to assemble for counsel and action at the Cooper Institute, on Monday morning next, at eleven o'clock." So concludes the Address, which is signed by ninety-one of the best known and most respected ladies of New York.

The meeting was accordingly held, and presented probably the largest council of women ever assembled in this country. It was presided over by D. D. Field, Esq. Rev. Dr. Bellows

explained the objects of the meeting, and was followed in an eloquent speech by Vice-President Hamlin, then understood to be awaiting in New York the possible necessity of transferring the official power of the government to that city, should Washington, with the President and Cabinet, be cut off by the threatening interposition of rebel forces. Dr. Crawford, since Brigadier-General Crawford, who had been at Fort Sumter, followed him. Dr. Wood, of the Bellevue Hospital, offered the services of his associates in the training of nurses. Dr. Valentine Mott and Dr. A. H. Stevens, veteran leaders in the medical profession, both urged the merits of the enterprise. The late Rev. Dr. Bethune eloquently spoke some of the last words he was permitted publicly to utter, at this meeting. Dr. Satterlee, U. S. A., whose name is the synonyme for integrity, and who has expended millions in the national Purveying Department, without ever being suspected of turning, directly or indirectly, a penny to his own account, expressed his earnest good-will to the undertaking. Rev. Dr. Hitchcock, Dr. Church, and others, also raised their voices in the promotion of the effort.

A Committee on Organization was appointed by the chair, who brought in "Articles of Organization," which had already been very carefully prepared, and which, under the name of the "Woman's Central Association of Relief," united the women of New York in a society, whose objects were thus stated:—

"ART. III. The objects of this Association shall be to collect and distribute information, obtained from official sources, concerning the actual and probable wants of the army; to establish a recognized union with the Medical Staff of the Federal and State troops, and to act as auxiliary to their efforts; to unite with the New York Medical Association, for the supply of lint, bandages, &c., in sustaining a central depot of stores; to solicit and accept the aid of all local associations, here or elsewhere, choosing to act through this society; and especially to open a bureau for the examination and registration of candidates for medical instruction as nurses, and to take measures for securing a supply of well-trained nurses against any possible demand of the war."

The venerable and distinguished Dr. Valentine Mott was

appointed President of the Association ; Rev. Dr. Bellows, Vice-President ; G. F. Allen, Esq., Secretary ; and Howard Potter, of Brown, Brothers, & Co., Treasurer.

The Association went into immediate operation, and invited local societies to look to it for guidance. It asked for supplies, collected money, and diligently registered and trained nurses.

The first business, however, of the Executive Committee was to collect reliable information, from the ranking Medical Officer of the United States Army then in New York, in regard to the necessities of the troops. The Chairman of this Committee accordingly sought the Medical Purveyor, armed with the following written questions, which are here given from the original draft. They show that; at the earliest period of this movement, principles were kept in view which have never since been lost sight of, and which have only grown in importance and sway in the mind of the Commission.

QUESTIONS PUT TO THE CHIEF MEDICAL PURVEYOR OF THE  
UNITED STATES ARMY.

*1st Class of Questions.*

1. What are the precise functions of the Medical Staff of the army in time of war? and how can medical and volunteer aid be best offered in its service, without interfering with proper discipline and routine?

2. What are the stores and supplies which the government orders and allows the sick or wounded? and is there any deficiency in this army supply which it is desirable to eke out by volunteer aid?

3. What are the most urgent wants of the army in the way of medical stores, which are not within the reach of the Medical Staff?

4. Please furnish a complete list of all wants which the sick and wounded are likely to experience, which are not supplied by the Army Staff.

5. Is it desirable or feasible to have any official understanding with the Medical Bureau at Washington, with General Scott, the Secretary of War, and the President, in regard to the relations of the Military and Medical Staffs and the volunteer associations?

*2d Class of Questions.*

(Designed to get at the amount of aid which will be required, and the nature of it.)

1. How many men are likely to be in the field during this war? Are not 200,000 certain to be in the field for six months or a year, and 100,000 for three years?

2. What is the recognized percentage of illness in all our armies, independent of climate and position? How does military differ from civil life, or armies from other assemblages of people, in respect of exposure to sickness? Is there a marked difference between regulars and volunteers in respect of sickness?

3. How are armies affected by change of climate and local situation? and what is likely to be the extent and effect of the change to which our army will be subjected?

4. What are the specific diseases to which our army will be exposed?

5. What is the usual proportion in armies of sickness to casualties, wounds, &c., and all other kinds of injury?

6. What was the experience of the Mexican war? How many men were engaged in it? What portion died? What portion were killed? What proportion were ill? How many Northern troops were in the war? How did they stand the climate? What was the case in the Florida war, in all these respects?

7. Have recent wars, at home or abroad, changed the views of army surgeons in regard to military hygiene?

8. Is not the sickness against which we ought to prepare mainly independent of the question of positive battles? Can the probable amount of it not be calculated, its nature anticipated, and means for its alleviation and cure be at once provided? Is not an army of observation liable to more sickness than one in active service?

9. Should not means of prevention be resorted to? and should not these means be sought in an inquiry what part of the anticipated illness is due to necessary, and what part to accidental causes,—what part may be obviated, and what can only be remedied?

10. Are not all such considerations reducible to these ?

*a.* The physical quality of the men sent ;

*b.* The nature of their food and cooking ;

*c.* The quality of their clothing, outfit, and camp habits.

Their climate ; their necessary exposure ; their liability to malarious, contagious, or camp diseases, cannot be changed. But cannot the percentage of illness and loss be reduced to its minimum, as well as the general efficiency of the army be raised to its maximum, —

1st. By more rigid medical examination of recruits, and all men placed in new regiments ? Is not the laxity great at present ? Next, by sending back all those who have gone, who, on a re-examination at Washington, are seen to be physically incompetent to the trial before them, supplying their places by fresh men, carefully selected ?

2d. Is not the cooking of the regular and volunteer corps capable of a vast practical improvement ?

*a.* What are the present usual regulations or customs in this matter ? How is food prepared ? and by whom ?

Might not cooks of adequate skill, previously tested, or even carefully prepared here, be sent, one with each company, by orders from head-quarters ? And would not this diminish, by several per cent, the sickness of the men ?

*b.* Are the surgeons and officers sufficiently attentive to precautionary hygiene ? Do they inspect the food, the dress, the sleeping arrangements, the marching preparations, in respect of shoes, head-covering, and other matters ? And might not new orders in this direction from the Secretary of War have a great efficacy ?

Is there a sufficient and competent medical force usually sent with the regiments ? and how are medical volunteers likely to understand military hygiene ?

Finally, would not proper cooks sent with the army be better than nurses sent after it, and an adequate attention given to inspection of recruits and hygiene be even more efficient and useful than any amount of remedy ?

11. Will any quantity of excellent advice to recruits and volunteers, or any amount of receipt-books and cooking-apparatus, be of practical use, unless made compulsory by actual

enforcement from head-quarters or the Secretary of War? And how can their attention be best secured?

To these numerous questions the Medical Purveyor returned the kindest and most patient verbal answers. It was, however, perfectly obvious, that, while, as a warm patriot and a gallant man, he rejoiced in the enthusiastic uprising of the women of the land, as a member of the Medical Staff and a Medical Purveyor of the United States Army, he regarded their solicitude as very much exaggerated, and their proffer of aid as mostly superfluous. He assured their committee that the government was ready and willing to supply everything the soldiers needed or could need; that the Medical Department was fully aroused to its duties, and perfectly competent to them; and that it would be an uncalled-for confession of delinquency and poverty to admit that the army needed, or would need, anything that the government and the Medical Department were not able and willing to furnish. Not, however, completely to slacken the milk of human kindness in the women's breasts, it was thought expedient to indulge them with the opportunity of supplying a short list of articles,\* until the public anxiety should calm down by discovering the admirable and thorough organization and efficiency of the Medical Department. The writer remembers, as if it were yesterday, the glow of national pride with which he heard the honest old soldier unfold the resources of the government, the zeal and humanity of the Medical Department, the admirable adequacy of its efforts in the Mexican war; and recalls the settled convictions with which he left the presence of this experienced medical officer, that the haste of the humane had outrun their knowledge and their judgment, and that it was his own duty at once to allay wasteful activity by publishing fully the results of his satisfactory conference with the representative of the Medical Bureau in New York! There is not the least reason to question that the Medical Purveyor's judgment was as sound as the wholly untried future on which our

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\* "Dressing-gowns; night-shirts; flannel under-clothing in general; drawers (made loose); socks; slippers; flannel bandages for the abdomen, one yard long, eight inches wide."



country was then entering allowed any man's to be; that he exhibited only a true *esprit de corps* in the ground he took, which was as honest as it was faithful. It is recorded here, only because it was the first instance of a feeling with which afterwards the Sanitary Commission had continually to strive, — an honest and proper feeling in the Medical Department, which, however, just as honest and just as proper a feeling in the public has been obliged to withstand, qualify, and correct.

Notwithstanding the cold water thus dashed in the face of the Woman's Central Association, in the first warmth of its being, and the distrust awakened in the minds of its very founders as to the necessity of its existence, matters had gone too far to be immediately dropped. The seventh article of the Constitution had made it incumbent on the Executive Committee "to establish direct relations with the central authorities of the Medical Staff"; and, accordingly, after inviting the Board of Physicians and Surgeons of the hospitals of New York, which had been recently organized for similar loyal purposes, and the "New York Medical Association for furnishing Hospital Supplies," to join the "Woman's Central," in a delegation to Washington, a committee, consisting of Dr. W. H. Van Buren, Dr. Elisha Harris, Dr. Jacob Harsen, and Rev. Dr. Bellows, repaired to the national capital to confer with the medical authorities and the War Department in regard to the whole subject of volunteer aid to the army. A few days' study, on the ground, of the condition of the troops arriving at Washington, the character and military training of the officers and surgeons accompanying them, and an observation of the immense pressure on the War Department and on the Medical Bureau, satisfied the committee that our army was expanding with a rapidity which made the existing machinery in any department labor and strain, as would a small engine, built only to work a river steamboat, if transferred to an ocean vessel. They found every bureau overwhelmed with work, and embarrassed by the prodigious though natural ignorance of the swarms of young and inexperienced officers, who neither knew what was wanted, nor how to supply the wants when they discovered them. Regiments arriving at Washington, after thirty-six hours passed in cattle-cars with insufficient

food and without sleep, were kept standing in the street from twelve to eighteen hours longer, because their colonel or quartermaster did not know how to make a requisition for food or quarters. Surgeons did not ask for medicines in terms that the Medical Bureau could recognize, or if they did, it took, at the very least, a fortnight to get the requisition filled. The Purveyor's store-rooms, to the Committee's view, presented an ominous vacancy, and the total aspect of the Medical Bureau was that of dignified routine and a Rip Van Winkle sleepiness, which alarmed them indescribably for the medical prospects of the army. There was nothing peculiar, remarkable, or specially blameworthy in this state of things. The Medical Bureau had been for years one of the best-ordered bureaus in the government. Its business since the Mexican war had been very slight, and was well done. In that war its duties had not exceeded its abilities and resources. It did not expect to prove otherwise than wholly equal to any emergencies likely to arise now. A mighty war, not at all recognized in its growing proportions, had broken out. Those most engaged in meeting the immediate pressure, had least opportunity to study the future necessities it would create. Officials, whether in the civil, military, or medical service, seemed, in proportion to the length of their services and their education in technical routine, to be least aware of the new bottles which would be required to hold the new wine, — least expectant of the vast strain that was to be put on the government machinery, and of the necessity of immediately strengthening and enlarging it, manning it with new and more vigorous officials, and working it on a broader and more generous plan. And yet there were reasons for great care in this urgently called for reform. The Cabinet officers, new in their places, could not dispense with the experience and routine knowledge of the old heads of bureaus; nor could they, without alarm and anxiety, see even the inadequate machinery of the government tampered with by zeal and patriotism. They had to stand for order and method amid the convulsions and freshets of the time; and there can be no doubt that the reluctance with which all changes have since been effected at Washington — the official *vis*

*inertia*—has been of the utmost benefit, considering the strength and ignorance, the impatient zeal, and often precipitate patriotism, which have so constantly sought to revolutionize bureaus and departments.

The Committee had the great advantage of the judgment of one of its members, who had for five years been not only a member of the Medical Staff, U. S. A., but who had served for two years in the Medical Bureau itself. To a thorough acquaintance with the routine of the department he added sixteen years' experience in civil practice, where he had attained an enviable, not to say an unrivalled position;—to zeal he added knowledge; to humanity, judgment; to aspiration, patience. The weight of his professional character, both in the Medical Staff and in the profession at large, proved not only of invaluable service at the inauguration of the Sanitary Commission, but has been, in all medical questions ever since, the guiding and decisive influence. It is not too much to say, that without him the Sanitary Commission would have lacked its medical balance-wheel, if not its medical mainspring.\*

The longer the Committee conferred with the Medical Bureau, the more it watched the operations of the War Department, the closer its observation of the men arriving and of the camps about Washington, the more deeply and anxiously convinced it became, that neither the government, the War Department, the Bureau, the army, nor the people, fully understood the Herculean nature of the business we had entered upon, or were half prepared to meet the necessities which, in a few weeks or months, would be pressing crushingly upon them. Discovering the extreme difficulty of obtaining accurate information, even from the government itself, perplexed and embarrassed by the suddenness and extent of the war on its hands, the futility of any attempts to carry out the plans of the benevolent associations whose delegates they were, without a much larger kind of machinery and a much more extensive system than had been contemplated in any of their organizations, the idea of a "Sanitary Commission," with an office and resident staff at Washington, presented itself to the Com-

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\* Professor W. H. Van Buren, M. D.

mittee as the only solution of the difficulties with which the benevolent intentions of their constituents and the supply of the actual necessities of the army were threatened, by the imperfect preparations and inadequate means of the government, under the extreme and growing pressure of the wants of hundreds of thousands of men in the field. The more the Committee considered the inevitable necessities of a volunteer army, without experience of the perils of camp-life, the more urgent appeared the necessity for such a guardian, outside organization, which should undertake in advance the labor which both England and France had been compelled to assume after a most terrible experience,—the labor of calling the attention of the national army, by a system of inquiry and advice, to the peril of neglecting the conditions of health, and to the immense advantages of the strictest regard to sanitary and hygienic principles. Officers of the regular army, and even the rank and file, accustomed to live in military quarters, and carefully instructed in the literature of their profession, or trained to its usages, were to be supposed to be fully acquainted, theoretically and practically, with this subject. But what could be expected from the great body of volunteers, officers and men? Must there not inevitably ensue most disastrous consequences, if this body, constituting eleven twelfths of the whole force, were not by some extraordinary means instructed, in some other than the slow and expensive school of experience, in the necessities of camp-police, of ventilation, of personal cleanliness, and of whatever else belongs to the new conditions of camp-life?

Urged on by the warnings of terrible mortality in the Italian and Crimean wars, the Committee who visited Washington, at first solely with reference to opening a good understanding with the government, and especially with the Medical Department, in respect to the supply of hospital clothing, became still more interested in obtaining the appointment by the government of a *Preventive* service,—the ordering of a Sanitary Commission, to be charged with the duty of obtaining all requisite knowledge of the subject, and of diffusing among the troops such information, warnings, and advice as their inexperience of camp-life made indispensable.

On broaching this idea to the government, it was very soon made plain that it would not appoint a Sanitary Commission such as England and France had appointed, — a commission with *real powers*. What was really needed was a regularly constituted official body, with ample powers to recommend and to enforce such regulations for the health of the troops as their extraordinary exposures required. And it need hardly be said, that, in military bodies, the only really inoffensive form of advice is the authoritative form; for then personal feelings are sunk in official rights and duties. But the government, too busy, too inexperienced itself in the matter on hand, made the mistake of accepting only the proffered services of a volunteer Sanitary Commission, instead of appointing a thoroughly governmental and truly official body of commissioners, and intrusting to them, with suitable powers, the sanitary oversight of the volunteer troops. This mistake has, no doubt, cost hundreds of lives, and will cost thousands more. It was a natural and an honest mistake on the part of the government, who had little time to give to the subject, and gave any only under the most persistent pressure of those interested in the matter.

Finding, however, that this was the settled policy of the Government, the friends of the plan were driven to try the next best thing, although greatly removed from it in efficacy; and that was to obtain the ordering of a Sanitary Commission *without* rights or powers, — a simply advisory body, who were to have the privilege of visiting camps, hospitals, and barracks, and of insinuating sanitary advice, and obtaining such wholesome influence as a semi-official but really powerless body could acquire by the self-recommending merit of its inspectors. And this privilege, after much straining, was at last conceded by the government, on condition that the Medical Department of the army would consent to it.

The consent of the Medical Bureau, with whom the Committee had already, while considering the subject of Hospital Supplies, established pleasant and amicable relations, was duly solicited to the appointment of a Sanitary Commission, without *powers* and emoluments, although with *duties* enough to satisfy the most active. Happily, or unhappily, — in the event it

seems difficult to say which, — the Medical Bureau was then under the control of the excellent and respected Dr. R. C. Wood, Acting Surgeon-General of the United States Army. Dr. Lawson, so long Surgeon-General, was yet alive, but beyond the power of active service, slowly dying at Norfolk, Va. Dr. Wood entered kindly and heartily into the wishes of the Committee, became a convert to its views, asked the Secretary of War for the appointment of a Sanitary Commission, to be put in confidential relations with the Bureau, and to aid it with counsel and advice, and in such other ways as might prove convenient. The Commission was to be on the most confidential footing with the Medical Bureau; not on a stiff, official footing, — for that must spoil all, where no official rights or powers existed on its part, — but in cordial, confidential relations, by means of which the sanitary knowledge and medical science and sympathy of the country could be poured into the Bureau through the Commission, which proposed to unite, with its own limited number and attainments, the chief scientific and medical wisdom of the whole country, in the form of Associates. The honest plan was to aid the Medical Bureau, without noise, without rivalry, and without stint, in sustaining the enormous weight of responsibility and care thrown upon its shoulders by the sudden successive expansions of the army from twenty thousand to what soon became half a million and more of men. Dr. Wood, a man proud of his staff and of honorable pride himself, was not too proud to acknowledge the advantages and the necessity of this outside aid. He felt that it was no impugment of his own dignity, or that of his staff, to accept and to ask for it. The good faith of the arrangement was guaranteed by the selection of several distinguished regular army officers as members of the Commission, and by the appointment of the Acting Surgeon-General himself as one of them. He still continues a member of this Board, in friendly relations with every member of it. Had Dr. Wood remained at the head of the Medical Department, the Sanitary Commission could never have come into the least collision with the Bureau. They would have been one body and one soul, — the Bureau carrying out, with its ample powers and facilities, whatever was seen to be well planned and judicious and in

furtherance of the grand objects belonging equally to the Medical Department and to the Commission. There was no pretence at that time (a few weeks had taught them so much) that the Medical Bureau had, or could have, a proper supervision of the sanitary wants and perils of the volunteer force. To meet, promptly, even the purely medical wants of such an army, was beyond its utmost power. How, then, could it hope to discharge the duties appertaining to sanitary inspection? and what physician, of generous, comprehensive, and humane character, in Dr. Wood's position, could have failed to see, as he saw, the duty of welcoming such aid, without suspicion, provided it came from a body of tolerable competency and public responsibility?

When, after long, patient, and heart-rending delay, the papers authorizing the Commission were fully agreed upon, engrossed, and waited only the final signature of the Secretary of War to become an order of the Department, Dr. Lawson's death occurred, and the accession of his regular successor, by seniority in the staff, immediately followed by what seemed to be a matter of course. Dr. Wood, who had for many years had the duties of this office without its honors, and who, it was understood, was, in the very highest quarters, urged as the proper person to become Surgeon-General, nobly declined being considered a candidate, in allegiance to what he considered to be a proper deference to military usage and the good order and fellowship of the staff itself. Whereupon, Dr. Finley came into office, and immediately expressed himself as opposed to the whole arrangement made by his predecessor for the appointment of the Sanitary Commission; declared that he would have nothing to do with it; that, if it went into operation, the responsibility must rest with Dr. Wood; that it was a mischievous and perilous conception to allow any such outside body to come into being;—but, in consideration of the public wish and expectation, he consented not to oppose it, if the Commission would confine themselves strictly to the oversight of the *volunteer* force, and not meddle with the regulars. This was agreed to, and then Dr. Wood was instructed to inform the Secretary of War, that the Medical Bureau would consent to the issuing of the papers, which had been mysteriously stopped, constituting the Sanitary Commission.

The letter to the Secretary of War first calling his formal attention to the subject is dated Washington, May 18, 1861. The Acting Surgeon-General's letter to the Department, asking for the appointment of the Sanitary Commission, bears date, "Surgeon-General's Office, May 22, 1861." "The draft of powers" asked by the Committee from the government is dated May 23, 1861. The order for the Commission was issued by the Secretary of War June 9, 1861, and approved by the President June 13, 1861. On that day the Sanitary Commission was organized, and sent in its plan of organization to the War Department, which returned it with the following indorsement:—

"WAR DEPARTMENT, Washington, June 13, 1861.

"I hereby approve of the plan of organization proposed by the Sanitary Commission as above given; and all persons in the employ of the United States government are directed and enjoined to respect and further the inquiries and objects of this Commission to the utmost of their ability.

"SIMON CAMERON,

*Secretary of War."*

Thus, after a month's struggle with the apathy, preoccupation, or suspicions of the government, was the Sanitary Commission launched into existence. We have the best reasons for knowing that the scheme was considered by the government troublesome, impracticable, and dangerous; that it was fancied, to use the language of the President, "it might become the fifth wheel to the wagon,"—a very embarrassing appendage. One of the most sagacious and respected members of the Cabinet was frank enough to say, after two years' experience of the Sanitary Commission: "I confess now that I had no faith in the Commission when it started,—prophesied that it would upset itself in six months, and that we should be lucky if it did not help to upset us! None of us had faith in it; but it seemed easier to let it destroy itself than to resist the popular urgency which called so lustily for a trial of it. I am free to confess now, that it has been of the greatest service to the country; that it has occasioned none of the evils expected from it; and that it has lived down all the fears and misgivings of the government. I hear from no quarter a word against it."



With a general suspicion on the part of the government, and a particular objection on the part of the Medical Bureau, the Sanitary Commission started upon its uncertain and struggling existence. The cool or cautious sentiments of the government were no serious trial, because their *actions* were friendly and helpful, and their official approbation emphatic. But the whole original theory of the Commission was dashed to the ground by the sudden and unwelcome accession to the charge of the Medical Bureau of a gentleman conscientiously opposed, on grounds not without weight and plausibility, to the whole conception, functions, and plans of the Sanitary Commission. From the moment he took his seat as Chief of the Bureau, all cordial intercourse between the Bureau and the body appointed to inquire and advise in its interests became practically impossible. Whose fault this was it does not become interested parties to decide. The public who read this unvarnished history of the facts in the case, who perhaps know the character and antecedents of the men composing the Sanitary Commission, are fully capable of forming their own opinion on the subject. Perchance the Commission might have been more cautious and discreet than it was; probably it sometimes attributed to the negligence and inefficiency of the Medical Staff what was only due to the imperfection of their powers and resources; very likely it did injustice to the motives and the conduct of individual members of the staff; possibly it was not wholly free from the spirit of rivalry, of criticism, and the love of power. But it claims to have exercised all the candor, the discrimination, the calmness, and the moderation to be expected from a body of men conscious of the honesty and disinterestedness of their motives, sure of their decent competency to the task they had undertaken, and possessed of the confidence and intrusted with the resources of a generous public, — a body of men who were set to look after the health of five hundred thousand citizen soldiers, and who, at the outset, disposed to repose full faith in the ability, zeal, and efficiency of the regular Medical Department, were compelled, as their investigations went on, to see how inadequate either the system or the staff was to satisfy the expectations and the demands of the nation at large, whether in

respect of the prevention of sickness, or the care and cure of it. It is not to be concealed, that when, by the act of the Surgeon-General, they were practically cut off from inquiry and advice, from counsel and co-operation with the Medical Bureau, they naturally resorted to the only alternative left, — independent activity and sharp criticism. What they could not quietly amend by their own exertions, or help to remedy by private remonstrance, they were forced to seek to change by public complaint and an appeal to Congress and to public opinion.

That the Commission began with a totally different intention is certain. When, for instance, as has already been stated, the public mind was so inflamed in regard to the necessities of all kinds of supplies for the sick and wounded, they sought authoritative information from the Medical Department on the subject, and adopted heartily its own view of its competency to supply every want, if not at once, then after a short delay. But how mistaken and misleading these conclusions were, the public, who have since furnished *sixty thousand cases* of hospital stores for the sick and wounded, and are not yet relieved from this necessity, can judge for itself. And so, truth compels us to say, the Commission found it with the opinions of the Medical Bureau generally. Its notions of what humanity required, its standard of comfort in hospitals, of adequate supplies, of what were fit hospital buildings, of what constituted promptness in answering requisitions, of what was an adequate medical force for the care of a given number of sick men; — its judgment in respect of what constituted a proper foresight in furnishing a distant expedition, or in anticipating the probable requirements of an advancing column; in providing proper prophylactic agents, either of vaccine virus or quinine; or of what should be deemed useful and effectual relations between the regular Medical Staff and brigade surgeons, or surgeons of volunteers, in general, — on all these points the Commission were compelled to come to an opposite judgment from that adopted by the Bureau, and of course to form a very unfavorable, and even anxious and indignant conception of its wisdom and humanity. Their standard may have been impracticable, their expectations unsound, and their views incorrect; but

being, nevertheless, the best which in a sober and conscientious judgment they could form, they were compelled to come to a general conclusion that the Medical Staff, as then organized, was not meeting the just expectations of the country; and that, if the people knew its defects, they would require their radical correction, and that it was the duty of the Commission to seek, through the War Department first, and then through Congress, and finally through public opinion at large, the reform of a system so ineffectual and so inhumane.

Their own special business, of preventing disease, by instituting an extensive and thorough system of inspection, disseminating, by medical reports and personal advice, warnings, and instruction in respect to sanitary matters, through every volunteer regiment in the field (with hardly an exception), was at once vigorously commenced, and with immediate results of a very gratifying character. The publication, too, of a series of medical tractates, carefully prepared, by the most learned authorities, for the use of the surgeon in hospital and field, proceeded rapidly. A system of hospital supplies organized in the most complete way, hereafter to be described, was, with the utmost pains, extended to every column, expedition, and almost every post or hospital of the entire army, eking out deficiency everywhere, and in many places supplying far the larger part of the comforts of the sick and wounded. At the end of six months the Commission had taken care of upwards of six thousand disabled soldiers in the city of Washington, who, but for their providence, must have suffered serious, not to say fatal hardships, in their transit from the hospitals and the ranks to their distant homes. They at once established a bureau of statistics, which will ultimately supply the material of a most important chapter of the interior history of the war. But all this was done without the facilities, or the aid of the machinery, or the support and co-operation, of the Medical Bureau, which, had it been freely lent them, as the government and as the Acting Surgeon-General had designed, would have quadrupled their success and multiplied indefinitely their powers of usefulness. Then their counsel, advice, and sympathy would all have found official channels and full authorization. The Medical Bureau would have supplied the missing link in their use-

fulness, and might have had all the support, sympathy, and co-operation of the medical and the general public, which were behind the Sanitary Commission, in furtherance of its own ends and aims. Whatever it wanted in respect of military rank, or additional force, or larger appropriations, it could have had, if it had not so unwisely taken the attitude, in a mistaken pride and vain sense of personal dignity, of opposition and resistance to the Sanitary Commission ; and the Sanitary Commission, if only the Surgeon-General had consented to be its friend, might have carried out, with more complete success, the humane intentions of that public which had so generously trusted it with money and supplies.

Can it be wondered at, that the Commission felt indignant that the obstinacy of one man, of conscientious narrowness and well-intentioned weakness, should frustrate and render abortive plans founded on the largest European experience, commended by the medical intelligence and the humane feeling of the great centres of knowledge and philanthropy throughout this whole country, and involving the lives and comfort of many thousands of our citizen soldiery ?

Fully convinced that all that any outside organization could do for the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers was very little compared with what an enlightened, humane, and earnest Medical Bureau could do, using the means and machinery of the United States government, — fully determined not to become the rival or substitute of the Medical Department, — the Commission determined to adhere strictly to the theory on which it had started. It was appointed to advise, to aid and assist the Medical Bureau. However inimical the immediate occupants of the Bureau might be to them, it did not change the fact that the Bureau was the only centre from which medical care and supervision could be efficiently dispensed to the whole army. To allow that Bureau to remain inefficient, narrow, and cast in the slough of the past, while an outside organization vainly attempted to supply its defects and negligences, was not to be acquiesced in for one instant longer than it could not be helped. Satisfied that, while the Medical Bureau was controlled by the lineal successor to Dr. Lawson, this would be the inevitable result, the Commission, having failed to pre-

vent his appointment, resolved to use every effort to secure his removal, and the appointment of a competent Surgeon-General by act of Congress. There were no personal objections to him, no imputation on his qualities as a Christian gentleman or a faithful official. He had simply been too long in the service, and was too rooted and grounded in contracted notions, too prejudiced against change and enlargement, to give any promise of adequacy or efficiency in the vastly responsible and important position he was called to. Without medical reputation, and too old to acquire it, inflexible, dogmatic, and proud, he resisted, on principle, all new and enlarged views of a medical or administrative mind, and in all probability would have caused, in a year of honest adherence to his own policy, more suffering in the army, by pure default of ability to prevent it, than twenty Sanitary Commissions, in full career, could have alleviated. It became, under these circumstances, the most urgent business of the Sanitary Commission to bring about a change in the control of the Medical Bureau ; and, as several members of the Board were members of government bureaus, and even connected with the Medical Bureau itself, — so that, as a Board, action would have been indecorous, — it became necessary for individual members of the Commission to proceed, upon their own responsibility, to urge upon the President, the Secretary of War, the Military Committees of both Houses, and leading members of government, the pressing necessity of a reorganization of the Medical Department, with an eye to a new head and a new *régime*. With what earnestness and pertinacity this was pressed upon Mr. Lincoln himself, that over-worked but ever open-eared and humane father of his people, must still have a painful recollection. How strenuously it was called for by commanders-in-chief, personally appearing, in company with the head of the Commission, before the President, and before the Secretary of War, with urgent petitions for a reform of the Medical Department, will also be remembered. The Military Committees of Congress heard with great patience, again and again, earnest arguments in favor of a bill reorganizing the Medical Department, which had been drawn up by members of the Commission, after the most deliberate counsel with distinguished mem-

bers of the Medical Staff; for there was no lack of restless desire in the younger and more educated members of the Medical Staff to bring about a thorough reform. Several bills, prepared independently of the Sanitary Commission, had been sent in to the Military Committees. Congress was full of complaints of our medical affairs. The present Secretary of War, on the third or fourth day of his instalment, accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, visited the central office of the Sanitary Commission, at Washington, and, in the presence of one of the most influential committees ever assembled at the capital, listened with careful attention to an exposition of the state of medical affairs in the army, and the necessity of an immediate reform in the Medical Bureau. He replied with most encouraging assurances of his own conviction of the necessity of some change, to which he promised to give an early, thorough, and persistent attention. The Commission, which had taken wholly on trust the sincerity of the late Secretary's professions of sympathy and interest, felt that in his successor's accession to the War Department they had secured a warm and consistent friend. They hailed his elevation to office with that general delight which cheered the whole country. If his offers and promises to the Commission have not all been redeemed, it is doubtless due to that enlargement of experience, that growth of practical wisdom, which in times like these so rapidly expands the high and responsible head of a department, and makes him by degrees insensible to the labors, services, and claims of those he once thought indispensable to the public service.

At length, but not without the most vehement endeavors, the most resolute opposition, and the slowest progress, a bill, seriously modified and impaired from the original, but containing the important features of the abandonment of the seniority principle, and the selection of the most competent and eligible candidate from the whole staff for the head of the Bureau, was carried through both houses, received the President's signature, and became a law.

Then the battle recommenced. The President had the nominating power, which of course he would not use without the advice and consent of the head of the War Department, to

which the Medical Bureau belongs. The Secretary of War, the moment the principle of seniority was departed from, was in the quandary in which any layman called to exercise a supreme judgment on high medical matters must find himself placed. He did not know, and could not know, who was the deserving candidate for the place. There was extreme danger that the appointment would become a matter of accident, guess, or favor. It was well understood that the late Acting Surgeon-General had obtained about as good as a promise from the President himself that he should succeed to the Bureau,—an appointment which would have been eminently acceptable to the Commission in its personal character, and which, to get rid of the new incumbent, they would gladly have used their utmost exertions to procure. But when the appointment became, by law, one that must be based purely on qualifications, they could not consider a man of the age and the routine habits of the late Acting Surgeon-General the fittest man for the position. It grieved them sorely that they could not see it to be their duty to urge his appointment.

What did they do? From the date of a prospective reform, they had given three months' conscientious attention to the inquiry who the man was in the whole Medical Staff who united in himself the largest measure of medical, military, administrative, and general qualifications for the office of Surgeon-General? Without personal acquaintance, much less personal friendship, with Dr. W. A. Hammond, then an assistant surgeon on the Medical Staff, all the inquiries they made ended in concentrating their preference upon him. They found him a man in the prime of life, who had passed eleven years in the medical service of the United States Army, and was thoroughly acquainted with the routine of the Department. His scientific propensities had not slumbered or slept while on the Medical Staff, though a life there is eminently unfavorable, in time of peace, to professional or medical ambition. He had distinguished himself abroad and at home by his original investigations,—was known as no other man on the Medical Staff was known in the civil-medical profession throughout Europe and the United States. Quitting the army to take a professorship in the University of Maryland, he had, in spite

of his loss of grade, immediately abandoned his professorship and returned to the Medical Staff when the war broke out. From the beginning of the war, in his hospitals at Baltimore, Wheeling, and Cumberland, and in his various communications to the public journals, he had commended himself to the Sanitary Commission inspectors as the ablest and most enlightened medical officer with whom they met. First induced by their representations to think of him, competent medical investigators were put upon his track ; his pretensions thoroughly explored ; his views and purposes carefully inquired into, and a solid and settled conclusion arrived at, into which no grain of personal predilection, or bargain, or mutual understanding entered, that this was the man for Surgeon-General, and of course the man to be urged upon the Secretary of War.

Before Mr. Cameron left office, the Commission had arrived at this conclusion, and had presented Dr. Hammond's name for the Surgeon-Generalship. For reasons utterly unknown to them, it was at once and even petulantly rejected, with an assurance that, whoever else might get the place of Surgeon-General, Dr. Hammond should never have it, — a conclusion we were forced to trace to some bog of Pennsylvania politics, the Keystone being the State from which both Mr. Cameron, his successor, and Dr. Hammond and his ancestry had sprung.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cameron went out of office, and Mr. Stanton came in. Dr. Finley was relieved of duty, and soon went, of his own choice, on the retired list, and the course was clear for a competent successor. The bill for reforming the Medical Department was now in force. The evidence of Dr. Hammond's right to this place was at once laid before the War Department, the President, and the Military Committee of the Senate. Petitions of the highest professional authority from the great cities besought the government for his appointment. What the reluctance was to make it is still hid in darkness, but that it was so great that the recollection of it still haunts the Department, and chills its perfect good-will, is obvious enough to all who have watched over our medical interests at Washington. Still the nomination was finally wrung out of the President, who was clearly embarrassed by great invisible difficulties. Probably the chief obstacle was the disinclination



of the Secretary of War. And this disinclination was either an inheritance from his predecessor, or a purely personal antipathy to a man of a very decided and commanding character, who would very likely manage his Bureau in his own way, or not at all.

In the medical bill, drawn up and pushed through by the Commission, a provision had been made for a certain number of medical inspectors, — high officers on the staff, — to be selected from the most thoroughly competent medical men in the whole service, regular and volunteer, and to whom should be committed the inspectorial and sanitary duties, which the Commission, under great difficulties, had been performing in a manner not at all to its own satisfaction. They wished as quickly as possible to throw these duties into more competent hands, which could be clothed with an official authority that they did not possess. The new Surgeon-General, to whom, by moral right, belonged the responsibility of selecting these inspectors, had, after careful consultation with the most learned and disinterested advisers, proposed a dignified and thoroughly deserving set of candidates for these places. This list was, by his own order, presented to the Secretary of War. The most urgent necessity existed, in the judgment of the Medical Bureau and of the Sanitary Commission, — put by Dr. Hammond's accession to office on its original confidential footing with the Medical Bureau, — for the immediate appointment of these inspectors. Hundreds of men were languishing in hospitals who were entitled to discharge, and could not procure it, for want of the existence of the very officers who had the duty of attending to this matter prescribed to them. The medical affairs of the army clamorously called for a staff to whom the chief of the Bureau could safely confide the execution of his prompt and energetic plans. But no nominations were made, or could be got out of the Secretary, until Congress (the House of Representatives) passed a resolution inquiring why the Medical Inspectors were not appointed, according to the bill which had been passed through, ordering their *immediate* creation. When the nominations were sent in, just half of them consisted of the names which Dr. Hammond had recommended; the other half was com-

posed apparently of political favorites, — for they were, in medical and other respects, wholly undeserving of the responsible positions assigned them. Worst of all, a medical man of no reputation in his profession, unknown indeed, or unfavorably known, in the army, was foisted mysteriously into a position second only to that of Surgeon-General, — that of Chief Inspector, — to the utter ruin of the whole significance of that corps, which, in the consequent squabbles and struggles it has passed through under the personal influences exerted to keep the Chief Inspector in place, has almost wholly failed of the object of its creation, — a result for which the Secretary of War may thank himself and his unmedical advisers, but for which the country will not thank him. It seems probable that the ill-feeling connected with these appointments lies at the root of the coolness which has marked the relations of the War Department and the Medical Bureau, and the War Department and the Sanitary Commission, since Dr. Hammond came into office. Happily, beyond the loss of the services of the Inspectorial Corps, and beyond the occasional mysterious disappearance from his post for a month or two of the Surgeon-General, sent down near the enemy's lines, possibly in the hope that he may become so disgusted with his anomalous position as to resign his post, no serious injury has been done to the Medical Department by this unhappy and most unjustifiable want of cordiality; for the vigor, sagacity, and fairness with which the medical affairs of the army have been administered by Dr. Hammond are more than enough to dwindle any impediments of this kind into insignificance. Notwithstanding a late Commission of Inquiry, composed in part of personal enemies, sent by the War Department to scrutinize the conduct of the Medical Bureau, and notwithstanding newspaper rumors to the prejudice of Dr. Hammond's honor, the Sanitary Commission, whose opportunities are equal to anybody's for observing and judging the conduct of affairs, regard Dr. Hammond's administration with the most perfect confidence and admiration, believing him to be a personally incorruptible man, a man of high administrative qualities, and a true and great benefactor in his department to medical and sanitary

science, to the homes of the land, the soldiers themselves, and the national cause.

We have expended all this space and time upon the early struggles of the Sanitary Commission, not merely for the purpose of exhibiting the resolution with which it forced itself into a real existence, and became a power in the nation, but more especially to show how sturdily it held on to its original principle, — the root of whatever good it has accomplished ; namely, that the government is, or ought to be, the soldier's best friend, the only friend in a situation to give him constant and efficient protection ; and that the main service any outside allies can afford him must consist in arousing the government to its duties to the soldier, and accustoming the soldier to recognize, respect, and lean upon the government care. Whatever struggles with the Medical Department the Sanitary Commission has at any time had, have always been, not in the way of obtaining rights, privileges, or opportunities for itself, — of making itself more active, important, and influential, — but, on the contrary, always in the way of stirring up the Department to a larger sense of its own duty, a more complete occupation of its own sphere, and such a successful administration of its affairs as would tend to render the Sanitary Commission, and all other outside organizations of beneficence to the army, unnecessary.

The principle was seen from the first, and has been resolutely maintained under all circumstances, that the people's care for the soldiers, if permitted a free and spontaneous course, might become a main dependence of the army, and thus weaken the sense of responsibility and the zeal and efficiency of the official sources of supply and protection. This would be so unmeasured an evil, that, rather than incur the risk of it, it was a serious question, during the first year at least, nor has it ever since ceased to come up as a doubt, whether the regular service of the government, left wholly to itself, would not more rapidly and thoroughly cure its own defects, than when bolstered and supplemented by any system which humanity and outside sympathy could invent or apply. How long and how far, it was continually asked from the very first, is it safe and wise for the nation, in

its popular character, to undertake to do what the government can do and ought to do? Will not the government channels shrink and dry up in precise proportion to the freedom with which the sluices of private or popular beneficence are found running? Will not officials neglect their duties if they find other people ready to do them in their stead? Great as the sufferings of the first few months might be, were the people to throw the army entirely on the care of the government, at the end of two years or of five years would not the adequacy and constancy of the supplies, the methodical application of them, and the general results of official routine, discipline, and singleness of rule, secure a final result into which less suffering would have entered than on any other conceivable plan, however humanely and generously worked out?

The answer to these most urgent and pertinent questions is, that, in a national life like our own, — a democracy, where the people universally take part in political affairs, — the government has no option in the case. The popular affections and sympathies will force themselves into the administration of army and all other affairs in times of deep national awakening. The practical question was not, Is it best to allow the army to depend in any degree upon the care of the people as distinguished from the government? Considered on administrative grounds alone, that question, we have no doubt, should be answered negatively. But no such question existed in a pure and simple form. It was this question rather, How shall this rising tide of popular sympathy, expressed in the form of sanitary supplies, and offers of personal service and advice, be rendered least hurtful to the army system, and most useful to the soldiers themselves? How shall it be kept from injuring the order, efficiency, and zeal of the regular bureau, and at the same time be left to do its intended work of succor and sympathy, — to act as a steady expression of the people's watchful care of their army, and as a true helper and supplementer of what the government may find it possible or convenient to do from its own resources? It was this mixed question the Sanitary Commission found itself called to answer, and its whole plan and working have been one steady reply to it. It could not be deemed wise, much less was it

possible, to discourage and deaden the active sympathies of the people. They would follow their regiments to the field with home-comforts and provisions against wounds and sickness. The women would hurry to the hospitals and camps. For the first six months after the war began, the departments at Washington were fairly besieged by humane committees, masculine and feminine ; business was interrupted, clogged, and snarled by the obtrusion of aid and comfort. Every regiment that went into the field had another regiment of anxious friends pushing into the camp to look after it, and supply its possible or real wants. State and local relief committees were named Legion ; and it looked as if the Commissariat and Medical Departments were going to be swamped in popular ministrations. The beauty and glory of the affections which led to this self-sacrificing attendance and provision were not to be lost or dimmed by neglect. Nay, they were to be cherished with the utmost assiduity and the fullest sense of their national value.

On the other hand, the method, efficiency, and development of the governmental resources, the order and sway of the Medical Department, were not to be sacrificed or delayed by the allowance of an unregulated, superfluous, and sentimental beneficence. Scylla was to be shunned, and Charybdis not grazed. The people could not, let them try as hard as they would, do the government's work. They could neither build nor furnish nor work the hospitals. They could not even supply them with nurses ; for men, as well as women, are absolutely necessary in that service, in military hospitals. On the other hand, a popular volunteer army could not live at all cut off from home sympathy, and from the demonstration of popular interest and watchfulness ; nor could government fitly undertake certain services which the people were ready to render to the army, and which might, with extreme wisdom and pains, be permitted, and even encouraged, without injury to discipline and official responsibility.

Between these two important and indispensable interests, home feeling, and governmental responsibility and method, the Sanitary Commission steered its delicate and difficult way. It assigned to itself the task, requiring constant tact, of di-

recting, without weakening or cooling, the warm and copious stream of popular beneficence toward the army. This owed its heat and fulness very much to its spontaneous and local character. Towns, cities, counties, States, were deeply interested in their own boys. To labor, night and day, for the very regiment that had rendezvoused in its square, or upon its common, to knit socks for feet that had crossed their own thresholds, and make garments to cover hearts that throbbed with their own blood, was not only easy for the people, — it was a necessity. And to send these by the hands of trusted townsmen, who should see these comforts put upon the very backs, or into the very mouths, they were designed for, was the most natural plan in the world, and seemingly the very best, as it certainly was the pleasantest. Why should not each State look after its own soldiers, — and each county, and each town, and each family? Certainly, this principle of local interest and personal affection could be depended on for longer and freer labors than any other. Was it safe to attempt to modify it, to mend it, to enlighten it, and to enlarge it? It was at least *necessary* to try to do this. Such a spontaneous, local liberality, however productive of materials and supplies of comfort, was absolutely unfurnished, as a very short experience proved, with the means and facilities for conveying, delivering, and applying its resources to the army. While our soldiers were mustering at a few near points, and drilling and disciplining for the contest, it was comparatively easy to reach particular regiments through special delegations, and with special supplies. But, after a few months, the armies of the Union left these convenient centres, and a very few miles of mud road between a corps and its base soon showed local committees the immense difficulties of *private* and *special* transportation. Moreover, when sickness began to appear, and anxiety for the well and strong was concentrated upon the feeble and ailing, the people soon began to discover that a soldier, after all, belonged more to the army than to his own regiment, and was ultimately thrown more on the care of the federal government and the general staff than upon his own surgeon and immediate officers. Slowly the nation learned that new thing in the experience of this generation,

what a *General Hospital* is, and what the course taken with a sick soldier must be. They discovered that in the suddenness and unexpected character of army movements, men were very soon put far beyond the reach of the knowledge and following of any local protectors ; that regiments were liable to be thrown from North to South, from East to West ; from Alexandria to Port Hudson and Vicksburg ; from Newbern to Nashville and Chattanooga ; and that their own sons and brothers, if they were to be followed and watched over at all, must be looked after by a national and ubiquitous body, which was with the army everywhere, at home at all points, and with ends and objects that recognized neither State nor county nor regiment, but saw only the United States or Union soldier, and ministered to him impartially according to his need, with absolute indifference as to where he hailed from. To explain this state of things at the earliest moment became the urgent duty of the Sanitary Commission. Naturally, but unfortunately, so many State and local associations were already at work, and represented in or near the great camps, that a swarm of angry and jealous rivals gathered about the plan of the Sanitary Commission, and have never ceased to sting its agents with disparaging reports. So kind and worthy were the intentions of those whom these associations represented, and in many cases so honorable and laborious the efforts of these agents, so natural their prejudices and jealousies, that, while strongly disapproving the principle involved in them as radically subversive of what they were laboring to popularize, the Sanitary Commission could not find the heart to oppose them. It therefore simply strove to make its own plan widely understood, and, by doing the work in hand in the only thorough and satisfactory manner possible, to win by degrees the confidence of the more distant and interior communities. On the whole, the intelligence with which the people have understood and appreciated its method is worthy of all admiration ; and the mingled sense and magnanimity with which they have gradually substituted for their original motive the *federal* principle, which, though larger, nobler, and more patriotic, lacks personal incitement and local warmth and color, is a new proof of the capabilities of our people.

Moreover, the education of our towns and villages in the principles of the Sanitary Commission, the overcoming of their local prejudices, of their desire to work for this regiment, that company, this hospital, or that camp, has been an education in national ideas, — in the principles of the government itself, — in the great Federal idea for which we are contending at such cost of blood and treasure. The objections to the Sanitary Commission have been precisely the objections that led to the rebellion, and to the war that made this Commission necessary, — objections to a Federal consolidation, a strong general government, a nationality and not a confederacy. State and local powers were claimed to be, not only more effective in their home and immediate spheres, but more effective out of their spheres, and in the promotion of ends that are universal. As South Carolina said she could take better care of her own commerce and her own forensic interests than the United States government, so Iowa and Missouri and Connecticut and Ohio insisted that they could each take better care of their own soldiers, after they were merged in the general Union army, than could any central or federal or United States commission, whatever its resources or its organization. Narrow political ambition, State sensibilities, executive conceit, and the pecuniary interests of agents, produced the same secessional heresies in regard to the national Sanitary Commission, that they either actually created, or have vainly tended to create, in regard to the general government itself.

Yet it can truly be said, that, while these tendencies have sometimes pulled with a fierce current against the Commission, they have never dragged it from its own moorings. They have borne away from it vast quantities of needed supplies upon most uncertain errands; they have greatly diminished the resources which should have poured into the reservoirs of the Sanitary Commission. But the wonder is, that, in spite of them, there should have been so prodigious a triumph of the Federal principle in the humane work of ministering to the army. Local, personal, and religious prejudices have all yielded, more or less slowly, but steadily, to the self-vindicating claims of the Sanitary Commission. At this moment,



the only region in the loyal States that is definitely out of the circle is Missouri. The rest of our loyal territory is all embraced within one ring of method and federality. This is chiefly due to the wonderful spirit of nationality that beats in the breasts of American women. They, even more than the men of the country, from their utter withdrawal from partisan strifes and local politics, have felt the assault upon the life of the nation in its true national import. They are infinitely less *State-ish*, and more national in their pride and in their sympathies. They see the war in its broad, impersonal outlines; and while their particular and special affections are keener than men's, their general humanity and tender sensibility for unseen and distant sufferings is stronger and more constant. The women of the country, who are the actual creators, by the labor of their fingers, of the chief supplies and comforts needed by the soldiers, have been the first to understand, appreciate, and co-operate with the Sanitary Commission. It is due to the sagacity and zeal with which they have entered into the work, that the system of supplies, organized by the extraordinary genius of Mr. Olmsted, has become so broadly and nationally extended, and that, with Milwaukee, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Louisville, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, New York, Brooklyn, New Haven, Hartford, Providence, Boston, Portland, and Concord for centres, there should be at least fifteen thousand Soldiers' Aid Societies, all under the control of women, combined and united in a common work, — of supplying, through the United States Sanitary Commission, the wants of the sick and wounded in the great Federal army.

The skill, zeal, business qualities, and patient and persistent devotion exhibited by those women who manage the truly vast operations of the several chief centres of supply, at Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, and New York, have unfolded a new page in the history of the aptitudes and capacities of women. To receive, acknowledge, sort, arrange, mark, repack, store, hold ready for shipment, procure transportation for, and send forward at sudden call, the many thousand boxes of hospital stores which, at the order of the General Secretary at Washington, have been for the past two years and

a half forwarded at various times by the "Women's Central," at New York, the Soldiers' Aid Society of Northern Ohio at Cleveland, the Branches at Cincinnati and at Philadelphia, or the Northwestern Branch at Chicago, has required business talents of the highest order. A correspondence demanding infinite tact, promptness, and method has been carried on with their local tributaries, by the women from these centres, with a ceaseless ardor to which the Commission owes a very large share of its success, and the nation no small part of the sustained usefulness and generous alacrity of its own patriotic impulses. To collect funds (for the supply branches have usually raised their own funds from the immediate communities in which they have been situated) has often tasked their ingenuity to the utmost. In Chicago, for instance, the Branch has lately held a fair of colossal proportions, to which the whole Northwest was invited to send supplies, and to come in mass! On the 26th of October last, when it opened, a procession of three miles in length, composed of wagon-loads of supplies, and of people in various ways interested, paraded through the streets of Chicago; the stores being closed, and the day given up to patriotic sympathies. For fourteen days the fair lasted, and every day brought reinforcements of supplies, and of people and purchasers. The country people, from hundreds of miles about, sent in upon the railroads all the various products of their farms, mills, and hands. Those who had nothing else sent the poultry from their barnyards; the ox or bull or calf from the stall; the title-deed of a few acres of land; so many bushels of grain, or potatoes, or onions. Loads of hay, even, were sent in from ten or a dozen miles out, and sold at once in the hay-market. On the roads entering the city were seen rickety and lumbering wagons, made of poles, loaded with a mixed freight,—a few cabbages, a bundle of socks, a coop of tame ducks, a few barrels of turnips, a pot of butter, and a bag of beans,—with the proud and humane farmer driving the team, his wife behind in charge of the baby, while two or three little children contended with the boxes and barrels and bundles for room to sit or lie. Such were the evidences of devotion and self-sacrificing zeal the Northwestern farmers gave, as, in their long

trains of wagons, they trundled into Chicago, from twenty and thirty miles' distance, and unloaded their contents at the doors of the Northwestern Fair, for the benefit of the United States Sanitary Commission. The mechanics and artisans of the towns and cities were not behind the farmers. Each manufacturer sent his best piano, plough, threshing-machine, or sewing-machine. Every form of agricultural implement, and every product of mechanical skill, was represented. From the watchmaker's jewelry to horseshoes and harness; from lace, cloth, cotton, and linen, to iron and steel; from wooden and waxen and earthen ware to butter and cheese, bacon and beef;— nothing came amiss, and nothing failed to come, and the ordering of all this was in the hands of women. They fed in the restaurant, under "the Fair," at fifty cents a meal, 1,500 mouths a day, for a fortnight, from food furnished, cooked, and served by the women of Chicago; and so orderly and convenient, so practical and wise were the arrangements, that, day by day, they had just what they had ordered and what they counted on, always enough, and never too much. They divided the houses of the town, and levied on No. 16 A Street, for five turkeys, on Monday; No. 37 B Street, for 12 apple-pies, on Tuesday; No. 49 C Street, for forty pounds of roast beef, on Wednesday; No. 23 D Street was to furnish so much pepper on Thursday; No. 33 E Street, so much salt on Friday. In short, every preparation was made in advance, at the least inconvenience possible to the people, to distribute in the most equal manner the welcome burden of feeding the visitors at the fair, at the expense of the good people of Chicago, but for the pecuniary benefit of the Sanitary Commission. Hundreds of lovely young girls, in simple uniforms, took their places as waiters behind the vast array of tables, and everybody was as well served as at a first-class hotel, at a less expense to himself, and with a great profit to the fair. Fifty thousand dollars, it is said, will be the least net return of this gigantic fair to the treasury of the Branch at Chicago. It is universally conceded that to Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Hoge, old and tried friends of the soldier and of the Sanitary Commission, and its ever active agents, are due the planning, management, and success of this truly American exploit. What

is the value of the money thus raised, important as it is, when compared with the worth of the spirit manifested, the loyalty exhibited, the patriotism stimulated, the example set, the prodigious tide of national devotion put in motion! How can rebellion hope to succeed in the face of such demonstrations as the Northwestern Fair? They are bloodless battles, equal in significance and results to Vicksburg and Gettysburg, to New Orleans and Newbern.\*

So much for the way in which home feeling was maintained and propitiated, while guided and economized by the Sanitary Commission. Thus Scylla was avoided! Let us now turn to the principles and method adopted in dealing with the question of governmental responsibility, — the Charybdis on which every volunteer or outside ministry to the soldiers was likely to make shipwreck. It was a first principle with the Sanitary Commission, that “a spur in the head is worth two in the heel,” and that the Medical Department was “the head” of the sick and wounded soldiers; the public, through the Sanitary Commission, or any and all other outside agencies, only “the heel.” Their main effort, as has already been seen, was to aid the more earnest and progressive men in obtaining control of its affairs, and, that done, to stimulate the department, by friendly criticism, by zealous example, by eager remonstrance, by considerate suggestion, by interposition in its favor with Congress and the higher powers, to do the best and the utmost, both in large and liberal plans, and in prompt and efficient execution of them, for the prevention of sickness and the humane treatment of what could not be prevented. This was doing good by wholesale. It was widening, deepening, and filling the normal channels through which ease and relief can alone be applied constantly, universally, and without disturbance to the military system. It is proper to say, that the Sanitary Commission holds for its highest boast, not what it has done, but what it has prevented from being left undone; not what relief it has itself, much as that may be, extended to

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\* Even while we write, similar fairs, in the preparations for which equal zeal and energy have been displayed, and from which equal results are likely to follow, are being held in Boston and in Cincinnati, and others are about to be held in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington.

the sick and wounded men of the army, but the comparatively small dimensions to which it has gradually reduced the call for outside aid and relief, by the energetic and humane administration of the Medical Department which it has aided in procuring.

It is not the fault of the Sanitary Commission, if exaggerated ideas of its claims and importance, as compared with those of the Medical Department, prevail in many quarters. In public addresses in all the great cities, in published letters to Governors of States and to State Surgeon-Generals, in its regular reports, and under all circumstances, it has magnified and celebrated the growing efficiency of the Medical Department, chronicled its vast and beneficent reforms, defended the Bureau against unjust charges, shown the recklessness of the rife rumors as to the general negligence, cupidity, and impotence of the surgeons in the service, and endeavored to acquaint the public with the dependence of the sick and wounded on the care, pity, and generous provision of the government itself, rather than on outside aid and mercy.

It is plain how exposed to misapprehension the Medical Department of so vast an army as ours is, how little credit it gets for the regular and successful performance of its duties, how much blame for its occasional failures to meet the exigencies that beset its affairs. All the while, for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, nursing, transportation, the sick or wounded soldier is dependent upon, and actually receives, seven eighths of all he needs from the government itself. The other eighth he must owe to the pity and care of some outside beneficence. He himself is apt to accept only as his due, and therefore thoughtlessly and ungratefully, all that the government does for him, and to have the liveliest sense only of what it does not do, and to utter the most indignant complaints at its neglect. Of course he gives a corresponding gratitude to those who come in as volunteers to supply the necessary or unavoidable defects and omissions from which he suffers; and the Sanitary Commission, or some similar organization, gets for its comparatively light labors the praise and the gratitude really due in much larger measure to the government itself and the Medical Department, — above all, to the laborious and

devoted surgeons themselves. It is the old fallacy : we think more of the two-penny ounce of butter than of the ten-penny loaf of bread ; because one merely satisfies our hunger, and the other gratifies our palate. The Sanitary Commission, being really in earnest, laboring not for praise, but for practical results, saw the vast importance of strengthening and stimulating that system to which the soldier must owe seven eighths of his chances of escape from sickness, and of care and comfort when sick ; and that no skill or success in managing and magnifying its own contingent work, which at the utmost was but a fractional interest, could be any sort of substitute for the zeal and efficiency of the regular department. It saw and recognized the value of the loaf of bread, and determined not to allow the butter question to blind its own or the public's eyes.

But, after all, it had its own work to do, and to do well. It was plain enough, after a very short study, that the general utility and success of the army system, and of the Medical Department as a portion of it, depended upon rigidity of method. Discipline is the soul of an army ; strict accountableness and limited responsibility are essential in the administration of military affairs. Routine makes the skeleton, and red-tape applies the ligaments to the system.

To attempt to supply an army as a family or a village or a city is supplied, or to carry civil maxims or customs into the camp, is a pure impossibility. Strict rules and regulations, and compulsory and inevitable conformity to them, are the conditions of the largest good to the largest number. It is certain, beforehand, that this necessary system will press with terrible severity upon a considerable class of exceptions ; but to consider these exceptions, and bend the system to accommodate or include them, would be to imperil the advantage of that vast majority which the rule is established to serve. If the tape is so loose that any one paper can be easily pulled from the bundle, all the papers are likely to be lost, or found scattered by the wind. The Sanitary Commission, therefore, has never joined in the popular cry of too much red tape ; it has never asked for, or consented to, any scheme for conducting medical affairs in a free and easy manner, without

military subordination and carefully limited responsibilities. Whatever evils have attended this system, have been less than those its removal would instantly evoke. Indeed, it was mainly to enable the Medical Department to maintain its own rules with rigorous fidelity, that the Commission undertook to look after only those individual wants, and those exceptional sufferings, which grow out of the necessary imperfection of all large systems, and which have always furnished it its only legitimate and welcome opportunities of service. That the exceptions in an army of a million and more of men, at one time or another in the field, with an average sick list of at least fifty thousand men, should be numerous in themselves, however small relatively to the number taken care of by the Medical Department itself, is what the most thoughtless might anticipate. They have been numerous enough and constant enough to task the utmost liberality of the nation, and to afford the most steady and exhausting labor to the Sanitary Commission. At no time have the extra supplies furnished by the public to the Commission, or to any and all outside ministries, been fully equal to the demands. Nor, with the experience now afforded to the careful students of army movements and exigencies, does it appear at all strange that great and frequent failures should attend the best plans of the Medical Department; battles proving general, when they were expected to be skirmishes or reconnoissances; the wounded turning out twice as many as any reasonable foresight could have anticipated; time and place of fighting being both suddenly changed; transportation impeded or preoccupied by greater necessities; and movements of the enemy, instantly defeating the whole, and the most sagacious, arrangements made by Medical Directors.

Let it be remembered, that the first office of an army is to fight, and that the first necessity of the government is to look after the fighting men, providing them with adequate ammunition, food, and reinforcements,—that at the time of an impending battle, or during one, the chief solicitude is not, cannot, and ought not to be about the wounded, but about those still able to fight,—and it will be seen how perplexed, delayed, and hampered the Medical Department must be, in getting

forward its stores, in removing the wounded, or in taking care of them promptly. The first interests of the army require that the Medical Department should be left in this subordinate and dependent position. You cannot afford it independent transportation without destroying its co-ordination with the other departments, and embarrassing it nine tenths of the time with the care of trains, horses, and forage, for the sake of the advantages that would accrue to it for the other tenth of the time. Nor can the commanding general safely allow his hospital stores to be jeopardized by advancing them to the front, which doubtless would, if safe, be the most convenient for the service of the wounded or the sick. Thus, after the battle of Gettysburg, when Meade was pursuing Lee's flying army, and another general battle was hourly expected near the old field of Antietam, the General would not and could not allow the vast medical stores required in case of a battle to be brought over South Mountain, because Boonsboro, beyond which his own head-quarters lay, and where the Sanitary Commission had opened its storehouses, was liable any day to be attacked and ransacked by the enemy's cavalry. This was prudent and humane; and yet in case of a great battle it must have caused enormous suffering. Now, for this very reason that it was not safe for the government stores, the Sanitary Commission determined to run the risk of its own stores, that, if a battle did occur, it might alleviate the wants of the battle-field, till the regular medical stores could be brought up. Thus the Medical Department followed its legitimate and bounden course of duty in obedience to judicious orders from head-quarters. The Sanitary Commission, with its independent transportation, and independent movements in general, followed also its legitimate and necessary duty, and stood ready to prevent the evils which must otherwise flow from the best and wisest course left open to the Medical Department.

But it was not in battle-fields and exigencies chiefly that the Commission found most seriously tested its principle of doing nothing for the sick and wounded soldiers which it could induce or compel the government to do. Regimental, field, and general hospitals have been the steady sphere of its labors. It has spent its chief time, supplies, and energies in satisfying



the wants existing there. For the first year of the war, there was not commercial industry enough in the country to supply the actual wants of the army. Clothing could not be manufactured fast enough to meet the rapidly recruited ranks. Cloths were imported by the government as a protection against the enormous rates which holders of suitable stuffs were selfishly exacting. Besides, the ideas of the government bureaus did not and could not expand as fast as the unprecedented wants of the army did. Timidity and caution tied up even the boldest hands. The suffering which existed in the rank and file from want of blankets, stockings, overcoats, and tents was very great. The regimental hospitals, under new and inexperienced surgeons, without acquaintance with bureau routine, were often desperately deficient, both in what they might have had, if at the proper time they had known how to ask for it, and in what no skill in asking at that time could secure. The general hospitals were just beginning to be established. Inconvenient and wholly unsuitable buildings were the only ones within reach, and the government was not then aroused to the necessity of creating proper ones. The hospital fund, the usual adequate resource of the surgeon for all *extra* comforts and delicacies, now extensively — nay, universally — in operation, could not at once be inaugurated, even by experts, and was utterly beyond the management of novices. It afforded no dependence for many months, and was of little use for the first year of the war. The Sanitary Commission took its place, and supplied a large part of all which the best and most efficient management could have yielded. It came in, everywhere, to do just what government and the Medical Department, in the sudden expansion of the army, by successive monstrous motions, from 75,000 to 300,000, to 500,000, to 800,000 men, could not so adjust means to ends, and supplies to the vast wants of the hour, as effectively and humanely to accomplish. But it did its work on system, according to analogous rules, and with a strict understanding with the department and bureaus, so as to discourage the imperfect preparations or inadequate arrangements of the Medical Bureau or Quartermaster-General; to make neglect hard and difficult and disagreeable for them; to uphold their efforts for

reform and enlargement; and to emphasize in such a way their dependence, as to shame them into efforts to break loose from it. The Commission furnished no hospital supplies except on requisition of the surgeon himself, who thereby acknowledged his dependence on outside help for what it was his pride and his duty to obtain from the department he represented. No distribution by outside parties was allowed. The discipline of the hospitals, with the authority of the officers, medical and otherwise, was to be carefully upheld. No help that could be extended to individual cases of suffering would atone for the injustice done the general principle itself.

That which has often been made an objection to the Sanitary Commission, that it did not fill the hospitals with resident relief-agents, or nurses, who should themselves be the judges of the wants of the sick, and the direct vehicles of relief, in the form of clothing, delicacies, or medicines, was one of its cardinal virtues. Such intrusion into military hospitals was not only fatal to discipline, to due responsibility, to the quietude of the place, and the control of the diet and treatment of the sick, but it was fatal to the peace, the self-respect, and the *esprit de corps* of the Medical Department. Wherever it was allowed, it did little but harm, and if the Sanitary Commission had encouraged or countenanced it, they would soon have lost all the influence they had with the department and the surgeons. Instead of this, they appointed experts to visit the hospitals, observe their wants, see the officers, nurses, and men, and, after conference with the surgeon in charge, to obtain from him a requisition on their supplies for what he felt the hospital to need, — to be applied under his own orders, and by his own agents, to his own patients. Skilled and judicious women, offering their services as nurses, and accepted through the free and hearty consent of the surgeons in charge, have rendered invaluable services to the sick ever since the hospitals were opened. But they have owed their usefulness to their strict obedience and conformity to army regulations, and only those docile and wise enough to respect the superior knowledge and authority of the surgeons have been for any considerable time able to keep their places, or to make themselves greatly serviceable. Perhaps two hundred such women exist in the whole

army, to whose noble, devoted, and gentle hearts, skilful hands, and administrative faculties are due a considerable part of the success which has attended the operation of our military nursing. The main dependence is, at all times, on detailed or enlisted male nurses, who, to the number of perhaps two thousand, are always on duty, and to the unwearied labors of our surgeons, — who, as a class, are not only utterly incapable of the negligence, drunkenness, fraud, and greediness with which they have been publicly charged, but have really rendered illustrious services, not only by gallant self-exposure in the field, but in watching and waiting on their charges with a vigilance which has cost many of them their lives. The cruel aspersions with which bigots and fanatics have often visited their conduct on battle-fields, where three or four consecutive nights passed in hard service, with only two or three hours' sleep, has made their ability to do any work, or to keep themselves alive, dependent on the use of stimulants, — charging them with general drunkenness, as at Chancellorsville, — are a scandal and slander which the closest and longest opportunities of observation enable us utterly to refute. The ordinary percentage of incompetency, lack of principle, and inhumanity doubtless exists among the army surgeons; but on the whole we judge them to be superior to any other equally large class of officers in the field, while their duties are probably more constant, and at times more exhausting, than those of any other class.

It is by strict fidelity to these general principles that the Sanitary Commission has endeavored to avoid the peril which threatened the efficiency of the government service, by outside interposition; and its success as an organization is due to the genuineness of the faith in which it has carried out its pledges to the government, to be a strictly subordinate and ancillary body; loyal to the Medical Department, — its fearless critic, but never its rival or supplanter, — its watchful spur, but never its sly traducer or its disguised enemy.

It remains now to unfold the actual organization and working of the Commission. But this we must defer to another paper.